

## Enewsletter

July 2013

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### Tamron USA State Park Series: Utah State Parks

Rick and Dody Sheremeta embark on a whirlwind tour to capture the Beehive State's most stunning rock formations, waterfalls, and slot canyons.

Article by Jenn Gidman

Images by Rick and Dody Sheremeta

When Rick and Dody Sheremeta decide they want to do a state park trip, they really do a state park trip. The couple recently went on a tour of southern Utah's finest, hitting a bunch of state parks and nearby landmarks. "We camped our way through southern Utah, staying about three or four days in each area," Rick says. "We had our trailer and our dogs. They were overjoyed to be on this trip, especially when we went in the slot canyons."

Each of the parks and attractions the Sheremetas visited on their trip boasted unique geographical features. "Kodachrome Basin State Park, which is just outside Cannonville near Bryce Canyon National Park, is made up of some fantastic sandstone formations," Rick says. "Not too far from there is Grosvenor Arch, a sandstone double-arch that's really neat and definitely worth seeing. Also nearby are the Willis Creek and Cottonwood Canyon. These are slot canyons with vertical walls towering several hundred feet and in many instances fairly narrow, with lots of interesting rock formations."



On the next leg of their trip, the Sheremetas hit Escalante Petrified Forest State Park, replete with large, petrified logs and exhibits of dinosaur bones and marine fossils. Not too far from Escalante are the Peek-a-Boo and Spooky Gulch slot canyons, accessed by Hole-in-the-Rock Road, which Rick calls “a long, gnarly dirt road.” “At Peek-a-Boo, there’s a 12-foot dry waterfall you actually have to climb up to access the slot canyon,” he says. About midway between Escalante and Peek-a-Boo is Devils Garden, which has lots of interesting spires to photograph.

Calf Creek Falls is another southern Utah landmark the Sheremetas visited, featuring beaver ponds, Navajo sandstone, and the 126-foot-high Lower Calf Creek Falls. Goblin Valley State Park, often compared to the Mars landscape, is home to sandstone “goblins” (Devils Garden offers a similar landscape to photograph with its own stone “toadstools,” formed by centuries of erosion).

Snow Canyon State Park, near St. George on the Utah/Arizona border, also features red Navajo sandstone, but its ancient lava flows are the big draw (removal of rocks and minerals is prohibited). Coyote Buttes North and South boast the famous Wave rock formation and a dinosaur track that has closely packed dinosaur footprints. The Sheremetas camped at Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park during their visit to the Coyote Buttes area. “The big draw at that campground is the sand dunes,” says Rick. “People go nuts out there on their ATVs.”

Rick and Dody took their trip in late April. “Late spring probably is the ideal time to visit these parks, because it can get unbearably hot there,” Rick says. “I’m sure the autumn is probably nice also. The parks can also get cold. We left Death Valley, which was 97 degrees, to head to Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park in Utah, up near Kanab, and when we got there it was snowing — the elevation difference is about 6,000 feet. When we continued over toward Kodachrome Basin, we had to go past Bryce Canyon, and there was about a foot of snow there that had fallen the previous night.”

Rick mainly relied on his Tamron [SP 24-70mm VC lens \(../../lenses/prod/2470\\_vcusd\\_a007.asp\)](https://www.tamron.com/usa/en/lenses/prod/2470_vcusd_a007.asp), complemented with the [SP 70-300mm VC \(../../lenses/prod/70300\\_vcusd\\_a005.asp\)](https://www.tamron.com/usa/en/lenses/prod/70300_vcusd_a005.asp) lens, for this trip. “I also brought along a tripod for waterfall and occasional nighttime shots, and a polarizer, which can really make the blue sky pop in certain situations,” he says.

In general, though, Rick tried to keep his equipment load to a minimum — especially when it came time to traversing the tricky slot canyons. “Minimal equipment is best there, because you can really dink your gear up,” he says. “When we went to Spooky Gulch, I brought a backpack along and ended up having to hold my pack in one hand and my camera in the other. I had to walk like Charlie Chaplin — my butt was on one wall and my head was turned sideways with my cheek on the other wall. There was maybe 10 inches of space to work with. I used my elbows against the wall to form a makeshift tripod and brace myself. I shot this image in the slot canyons at 1/6th, F/5.6.”



When he’s in the state parks, Rick employs different angles and vantage points to ensure a nice variety of images. “I’ll try, for instance, to focus on the sedimentary layers of the rock and get them diagonally as often as I can, because it’s just more interesting that way,” he says. “You can use those natural lines and striations and elements, which you can find in abundance in the parks, to pull the viewer’s eye into the image.”



The ideal time of day to shoot in the state parks depends on which part of the Utah landscape you're trying to capture. "We preferred to shoot in the evening in Goblin Valley, for instance," Rick says. "The way the rock formations are there, the morning just isn't as good for photography as the evening. The formations run north and south. It's better to photograph them on the west side of the valley, so the evening is the best time to capture them."

Midday, on the other hand, is probably the best time if you're doing some shooting in the slot canyons. "The sun is overhead then, shining down and illuminating both walls," Rick says. "I typically like to shoot these at a -1 EV exposure setting, because when the light comes down like that from the top, it tends to get blown out. If I shoot at -1, I can make adjustments in Lightroom later — it's easier to bring back the shadows than try to compensate for overexposure."

Don't give up on a park if you initially have trouble photographing some of its elements. "The petrified wood in Escalante is really neat from a geological standpoint," says Rick. "The outside of the wood looks like bark, but it's actually crystallized and turned to stone. However, from a photographic standpoint, it can be hard to find an interesting shot."

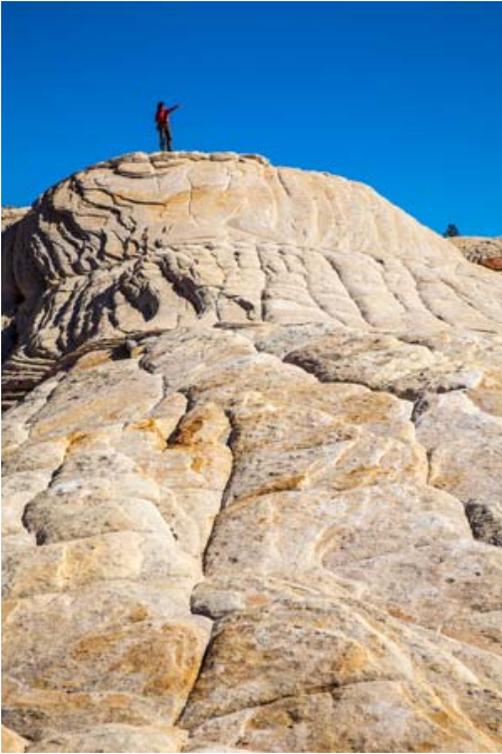
Instead, Rick found his Escalante shot one evening when he looked outside of his camping trailer. "We were set up right on the shore of the lake there, which is actually a reservoir," he says. "It was sunset, and as soon as I saw what was going on outside with the sunset reflecting on the lake, I grabbed my camera and ran out there. It was beautiful."



For his stop at Lower Calf Creek Falls, near Escalante State Park, Rick knew exactly what type of image he wanted to get: a silky, creamy waterfall shot. “Calf Creek is pretty much the only image I needed a tripod for during my trip, except for maybe a couple of nighttime shots,” he says. “This was taken right at noon, so it was quite bright. The key was to be able to get a long exposure (I shot this at 0.6 seconds), and the only way I could do that was with a Singh-Ray Vari-N-Trio variable neutral density filter.”



One final tip to showing off the gorgeous expanses of the Utah landscape: Show a sense of scale. “I took a picture of Dody when we were at Snow Canyon on top of one of the rock formations — she’s always a willing model,” Rick laughs. “I was about 300 feet below her, photographing at 70mm. If I hadn’t put her in the picture, the viewer wouldn’t have any idea how big that formation was. Without Dody in the picture, it might look like I just took a picture of a small rock!”



To see more of Rick and Dody Sheremeta's work, go to [www.alpenglowproductions.com](http://www.alpenglowproductions.com) (<http://www.alpenglowproductions.com>) . Check out the Tamron USA website for more information on Tamron's State Park Series (<http://www.tamron-usa.com/events/parks.asp>) .